Wrong Emphasis

ONE clear fact emerges from the Western Powers' proposal for disarmament. It is not even a plan for partial disarmament. It is basically a scheme to prevent the possibility of surprise attack by either side. Washington, if not America's allies, seems obsessed with such possibilities. The plan for inspection of armaments put up by Mr Dulles makes no secret of Washington's main motive or objective. Moscow has not rejected the proposal altogether. Mr Zorin has promised that the plan will be carefully scrutinised by the Soviet Union. But it is already clear that Moscow considers the plan to be inadequate. Many thinking persons will echo Moscow's disappointment with the West's hesitant approach to the problem of disarmament. Even so, there will be surprise that Washington, but not Moscow, should be so apprehensive of the possibility of surprise attack.

It may be possible for the Soviet Union to launch a surprise attack from the Arctic region. But it is equally easily possible for America and her allies to retaliate promptly or to initiate a surprise attack on the Soviet Union from the numerous atomic bases with which America has ringed the world. Irrespective of the world military balance, it is the Soviet Union which should have more cause for anxiety about any possible surprise attack launched from any one of the global bases fortified by America. Such Russian fears assume significance because of the American policy of arming the conventional forces of her allies with atomic weapons.

Why, then, is Russia reluctant to accept the Dulles plan for inspection as a prelude to gradual disarmament? Mr Dulles insinuates that Moscow's reluctance to accept the plan can only mean that the Soviet Union has something to hide. Mr Duller does not directly deny the Western Powers' superior ability to launch a surprise attack on the Soviet Union. But it is implied that the West harbours no such intention. It is further emphasised that the "open skies" plan proposed originally by President Eisenhower, reflects the West's sincere intentions.

Nor are the Western Powers haughty or dictatorial in their plan for a "first stage disarmament agreement". It may be a wrong approach to the problem. But, the West has not adopted a take-it-or-leave-it attitude. It is firm on what the first stage of a disarmament agreement should be. But, its plan for inspection is not inelastic. It envisages aerial patrol and ground inspection of the whole of the United States, Canada and the Soviet Union. Alternatively, it invites the Soviet Union to accept a similar plan of inspection over the Arctic region. On Russia's acceptance of either of these alternatives, the West propose: a plan for similar inspection of the whole of Western Europe, from Western Ireland to the Ural mountains.

If this wider, but conditional plan for inspection is rejected by the Soviet Union, there is another limited proposal for inspection over a smaller European Zone, including East Europe and West Russia. This last had already been accepted by Russia. But this concession was accompanied by a rider that even a limited plan for aerial and ground inspection should include SEATO and Baghdad Pact bases and areas.